


# A GRAIN OF WHEAT



1818 — 1918



CALIF. PROV.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2025









VEN. ROSE PHILIPPINE DUCHESNE

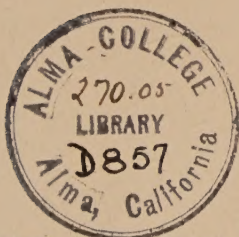


# A Grain of Wheat

(Ven. Rose Philippine Duchesne)

## CALIF. PROV.

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION LIBRARY  
2400 RIDGE ROAD  
BERKELEY, CA 94709



B. HERDER BOOK COMPANY  
17 SOUTH BROADWAY, ST. LOUIS, MO.  
AND  
68 GREAT RUSSELL ST., LONDON, W. C.  
1918

2627

NIHIL OBSTAT

*Sti. Ludovici, die 15 March, 1918*

*F. G. Holweck,*

*Censor Librorum*

IMPRIMATUR

*Sti. Ludovici, die 16 March, 1918*

✠ *Joannes J. Glennon,*

*Archiepiscopus*

*Sti. Ludovici*

*Printed in U. S. A.*

## PREFACE.

The Centenary of the arrival of Mother Philippine Duchesne and her devoted companions, Religious of the Sacred Heart, to St. Louis and the West, falls into a critical period of our and the world's history. We are witnessing more of that history in the making than perhaps ever before. Men and nations are being made and unmade—systems proposed and rejected. Each day, with its sordid story of tears and threats and bloodshed, brings also its indefinite hopes of newer, if not better things. Our prophets and leaders claim they will surely be better—that a newer freedom, for instance, will come (though its only examples to date are Russia and Mexico); that a new era of democracy will be inaugurated, though the means taken must be undemocratic—that peace will come by the sword, and militarism be crushed by militancy.

We Catholics also hope that the new era will be a better one—that while the world turmoil reigns, we shall plow deeply, uprooting the vices, exposing the weaknesses, permitting the frost and the sun and the rain to fit the soil for the seed to produce

the abundant harvests of the future,—that if there be more of freedom there will be more of faith—that the democracy of the future will reject the tyrannies its leaders can weave into it to serve their selfish ends—that we shall have a survival and revival of the individual as well as the national conscience; and that one and the other shall be trained along the lines of truth and justice and morality and faith.

If the newer order is to be better, it will require not alone the men of right mind and good will to struggle therefor, it will also demand the intelligent, well-ordered and unselfish support of the women as well. Home life must be restored, home virtues recalled, humilities practiced, obedience demanded, the Christian character in all its strength and activity developed. Education must take back its true character, releasing itself from the unholy alliances it has in these later years contracted. From these it must be rescued if we are to save humanity from the degeneracy and the debility of mind and soul and body, which your educational systems of yesterday have produced.

The new education must teach man that he has to live rather than to make a living—must teach women that they have responsibilities and duties, which they have to accept seriously.

The pages which follow give us an outline

of the life and labors, the service and travellings, the trials and the hopes of the Venerable Mother Duchesne.

She went through the fires of the French Revolution, and witnessed as we do to-day the clash of arms, as of ideas. She, too, suffered because of these; and at their close came with the new springtide of faith to the distant West. She knew what was needed for the great restoration. Where there was doubt, she would teach the unerring faith which has saved the world. She would in word and work show forth that humility—that spirit of service, and that consecration, which the Sacred Heart of our Lord so fully expressed. She would inaugurate a system of education that had in it all the elements of culture—all the genius of civilization, and all the spirit of Christ. Her life and labors would remain indelibly to impress themselves on the life of our people. She would set up a standard of education which after a hundred years has been found to be the most thorough, and the most fitting to the times and the people. Taking from the past all that was holy and helpful, she would still have the door open to the new age to admit anything of value. And through it all and in it all, her way, beset as it was with difficulties and privations, would be the Way of the Cross. The thorns of that way she would weave as her crown; the burdens, she would

bear as her cross. So that at the end of her journey, those who followed her, as her sisters, or those even who from afar off watched the way she went, united in revering her memory and proclaiming her sanctity.

The case of the Venerable Mother Duchesne is before the Holy See; and ours it is to wait and pray that the Church may, before long, give to her the title which we of the west country humbly petition for—that we may soon salute her, not alone as venerable, but as blessed.

†JOHN J. GLENNON,  
Archbishop of St. Louis.

*St. Louis, Missouri.*

*Feast of St. Matthew, 1918.*



## FOREWORD.

In the ripening grain of a Galilean harvest field our Blessed Lord saw figured the souls of His elect in every age. Some souls He finds ready to His Hand, and without apparent preparation He makes use of them for the interests of the Church, as once He plucked the ears of corn to feed His hungering twelve. Other favored souls are chosen among thousands, like the grains of wheat that are blessed, broken and changed into His very Self before He gives them to the world. Still others, called to the apostolate of prayer and work and sacrifice, He sows in new fields where they fall to the ground and die before they bring forth fruit, a hundred fold. Of this last type was the "valiant woman" Venerable Rose Philippine Duchesne.





## THE RIPENING OF THE SEED.

Rose Philippine Duchesne was born on the 29th of August, 1769, in France, in the picturesque city of Grenoble, whose citadels frown on the smiling waters of the River Isère. A narrow street separated the Duchesne home from the Church of St. André where for many centuries had lain the body of Bayard, the Knight "sans peur et sans reproche," but, though the little Rose Philippine was to rival and surpass him in fearlessness and blamelessness of life, it was not there but in the Church of St. Louis that she received baptism. Her father, Pierre François, made no delay in giving her the patrimony of indomitable strength and unbending will; her good mother trained her to piety and tried to temper her virile qualities with gentle sympathy that came of ministering to the poor.

Few incidents remain of the early years of her, whose serious turn of mind left little room for childish escapades. At the age of twelve Philippine went up the hills of Grenoble to the Visitation Convent of Ste. Marie d'en Haut. Its corner stone had been laid by St. Francis of Sales and St. Jane de Chantal, and in its chapel the holy

foundress had heard the words that told her that the soul of her saintly director and friend had returned to God. Within those monastic walls Philippine grew daily in the fear of God and the horror of sin, and her pure soul, so susceptible to piety, was soon enthralled by the devotion to the Sacred Heart, the carefully guarded heritage of the Visitandines. In their holy house Philippine received our Lord for the first time and knew that He called her to His service. There, too, was sounded the note of another call; for she listened with holy envy to stories about the Indians as told by a Jesuit missionary who had preached the Gospel in Louisiana. She longed to labor for souls in far off lands, and God who inspired the longing was preparing the seed—disappointments were to be means of ripening.

Philippine's years as a happy child of Ste. Marie were suddenly brought to a close; her parents, remarking her love of prayer and penance, feared that she intended to become a religious, and, forgetting that God is not a lover to be lightly put aside, they called their child home. There she entered fully into their wishes, learned Latin eagerly as the key to the Scriptures, earnestly studied music for which she showed no aptitude, took dancing lessons, and grasped the principles of drawing. And all this time, when God seemed to be only waiting, He was pre-

paring her for what He had in store. Her parents saw her docile submission to all they wished and planned a marriage for their daughter; but the announcement of this project became for Philippine the longed for opportunity to make known her intention to be a religious. Firm opposition was her parents' answer; so she quietly left home as if for a visit and entered Ste. Marie d'en Haut. In 1787 she was clothed in the habit of a Visitandine; her apostolate, it seemed was to be that of education; if her longing to go, like St. Francis Xavier, to foreign lands was not to be satisfied, at least she could, like St. Theresa, win souls by prayer; and in this crucible of unselfishness her zeal was proven true. If, with the Apostle of the Indies, she dreamed of a more extended apostolate; with St. Francis Regis she planned hidden works of labor among the poor and little. If Bayard's courage fired her heart, she was, like him, reproachless, for she was able later on to say that she never remembered having infringed a single point of the Rule. There at Ste. Marie grew the love that had all but drawn her to Carmel, the love of prayer and of the Blessed Sacrament before which she would spend whole nights when she could obtain leave. There is a sacred charm about night hours given to prayer, a hallowed atmosphere which recalls Him who prayed on the mountain side when His dis-

ciples, less weary than He, had gone to rest. During the day the world with its distractions may hover between the soul and God, but at night she seems to stand between God and the world and draws them together by her all-embracing love. God's grace seemed to be preparing Philippine for her profession, but, when in 1788 she cried out with yearning "My heart is ready," He who called her stayed her further advance. During her novitiate storm clouds had been gathering over France—a revolution threatened. Her father would not consent to her making her vows. The longed for day was put off, and she possessed her soul in patience, strengthened by the advice of a holy priest who seemed all but prophetic in his words of counsel: "God has secret ends in what He allows, later you will understand." But God's little seed was ripening, and Philippine, though heart-broken, did not ask to understand.

In 1791 the storm of the Revolution broke over France, and Monsieur Duchesne withdrew his daughter from Ste. Marie. Philippine put off the holy habit, symbol of what she loved best, and returned to the world. She would make the sacrifice of Ste. Marie, of her dear France, she would follow the Visitandines to Italy where they had taken refuge; but once more her parents intervened; and God, who called her, again al-

lowed her to be kept from Him. Her family left Grenoble and retired to Granne, and there in the parish church she saw a sign of hope, a token of God's approval; for above the altar hung a picture of St. Francis Xavier and St. Francis Regis. She invoked them both and rejoiced to find among the poor she visited, memories of the saint who had labored and prayed in those very hamlets. A faithful priest, disguised as Monsieur Duchesne's factor, often said Mass in a secluded room of their house. God had allowed Philippine to return to the world to break the ties that might have bound her to it.

Not long after the death of her beloved mother, the young girl returned to Grenoble, for she felt that she could best serve her father's interests by devoting herself to the service of the Church from whose fold he seemed to be straying. Time proved her decision right, for doubtless it was her sacrifice and prayer that won for him the grace of a blessed death. Grenoble was not as she had seen it last; Ste. Marie d'en Haut was a State prison, its cells crowded with priests, nuns, and persons of rank awaiting execution. Philippine with a few friends, who adopted the name of Ladies of Mercy, undertook to bring them spiritual and temporal help. They entered the foulest dungeons, served the prisoners with radiant joy and

wept with holy envy beside those who were going to death. Through her devoted zeal many a soul among the neglected poor of Grenoble received the Sacraments and died in peace.

Little by little the storm clouds rolled back, the political outlook brightened, and Philippine prayed and worked for the return of the Visitandines to Ste. Marie. A forty days' prayer to the Sacred Heart won the great intention, and on the 10th of December, 1801, the house was bought back by her relatives. A mob of street arabs whom she had prepared for their First Communion, and who, unknowingly, had trained *her* in patience, carried her parcels through the pouring rain up the hill to Ste. Marie. God has promised to hear prayer, and as a proof that "He is ever better than His word, not less good," that day brought the first visit of Father Rivet who was to be the divine instrument of drawing Philippine to the Sacred Heart.

But the end was not yet. Once more were her hopes to be shattered. She was joined by one Visitandine and a poor child. Slowly the number grew. On Christmas night they put off their secular dress to clothe themselves in the livery of religious poverty. In Passion Week the former Superior with several of her daughters came, and Philippine rejoiced in the restoration she thought com-

plete, and yearned for her profession. But now the trials which St. Theresa had met in her most difficult undertakings, fell to Philippine's lot. Most of the nuns were too advanced in years, too intimidated by cruel sufferings to face the winter in a ruined building, and to enter into Philippine's apostolic plans. In August, 1802, she found herself alone, save for a lay sister and a young girl who intended to become a religious. Again, the Divine Hand that beckoned seemed to thrust her aside. Father Rivet consoled her in her loneliness and spoke of a new Congregation whose spirit was based on devotion to the Sacred Heart, and whose Rules were modeled on those of the Society of Jesus. He hoped to draw the Foundress, Mother Madeleine Sophie Barat, to open a house in Grenoble and felt with Philippine that God might have been keeping her for this; but her time of waiting was not at an end. She was joined by Father Rivet's sister and by other postulants and together they formed an association under the name of Daughters of the Propagation of the Faith. Their means of spreading truth was a school that soon counted eighteen pupils. The seed was ripened. It was soon to be garnered into the Sacred Heart.

## THE GARNERING OF THE SEED.

The little Society of the Sacred Heart was still very young. It was born in a tiny upper room in Paris, November 21st., 1800. It was God's child, given by Him to Madeleine Sophie to bring up, at least so *she* would have thought; for never did she allow it to be said that she had given it being. She looked to Father Varin, S. J., as the godfather of the Society, the guardian of its best interests, and it was he who told her of Ste. Marie d'en Haut where Father Rivet had presented to him Philippine Duchesne, a "soul whom it would be worth while to seek even at the ends of the earth." While urging Mother Barat to go to Grenoble, Father Varin would laughingly check Mother Duchesne's holy impatience by speaking of the slowness with which God perfects His works. But at last, in Advent, 1804, the longed for visit took place and Philippine knelt at the door of her loved Ste. Marie to welcome her new Mother in the words of Isaias, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, and that preacheth peace."

Christmas was approaching and Mother Barat rejoiced to spend the season so dear



to her heart in a house whose poverty resembled that of Bethlehem. At Office when they called upon the ice and snow to join them in blessing the Lord, they were obeyed; for cracked and ruined walls lent scanty shelter from the elements. During a retreat given by Father Roget, S. J., the five new novices of the Sacred Heart were asked to place at Mother Barat's feet anything to which they were attached. Mother Duchesne felt that she clung to Ste Marie, but she longed to place it at her new Superior's disposal; grilles and other visible signs of austerity were given up and Philippine's fasts and vigils gave place in part to a harder renunciation, that of her will. She had not lost her attraction for an apostolate in foreign lands, but her mission for the moment was evidently to uphold Ste. Marie and continue its work.

In 1805, on the Feast of the Presentation, Philippine made her vows which during nearly fifty years she was wont to renew in characteristic words: "I consecrate myself to poverty, but how rich I am in Thee; I promise chastity, Thou art my soul's delight; I embrace obedience, but to serve Thee is to reign." The following year Dom Augustin de Lestrangé came to Grenoble and spoke of his great journeys, and of souls plunged in the darkness of error, and Mother Duchesne wrote enthusiastically to her Superior Gen-

eral of her renewed aspirations. The answer was a word of encouragement to advance :

“Never fainting, never faltering,  
In the path the saints have trod,  
Saints and saints alone can fitly  
Do aright the work of God.”

Philippine was still only a “saint in the making,” but Mother Barat, with that hopeful insight which God deigns to share with the holy, saw the promise in the seed that at times appeared unsightly to those less versed in the ways of God. But Philippine must bide God’s time, for there were not enough subjects for the work in France. Perhaps, too, “this little seed,” though ripened by pain, was not yet ready for American soil. In her night vigils, and in the spaces which even the most crowded day leaves to those who love solitude, she felt the longing grow more ardent. God again seemed to call and hold her back at once. She had yet to learn patience and prudence, the “*calme du ciel*” that was the atmosphere in which her Mother Barat lived.

Six years went by, and Philippine practiced in hidden ways the virtues of which she would later give an heroic example. It was for her dear Indians that she multiplied her penances as far as obedience would allow; it was of them that she spoke to God in prayer and to her children in recreation hours; it

was for them that she suffered long hours in the class room, long nights by the bedside of a sick child. They were symbolized in the lambs she painted on the walls of Ste. Marie. And when she would at times remind Mother Barat of the promise made, she would receive as answer the laughing question, "How can the voyage be made alone and penniless?" Sometimes, too, the holy Foundress with Burgundian wit would repeat the story of a Jesuit who after sighing for years for the missions, had been sent to foreign lands where he baptized *one old* savage and died. But both Mother Barat and her religious daughter would have counted all pain as nothing for the assurance of gaining even *one* soul to Christ.

In 1815 God accepted Philippine's generously offered sacrifice of her loved Ste. Marie; she was called to Paris to attend a General Congregation of the Society; but her appointment as Mother Barat's secretary made America seem farther away than ever. The gloom of this keen disappointment, however, was as often before, only the "shade of God's Hand outstretched caressingly;" for He had so arranged Philippine's life that she should be portress at the Mother House when Mgr. Dubourg, Bishop of Louisiana, came to ask Mother Barat to send some nuns to his diocese. Blessed Madeleine Sophie longed to accede to his request, but prudence counseled

delay. His Lordship was too much in earnest to be so easily put off; on his return from a visit to Belgium he called again at the Mother House and Philippine, whose disappointment at the delay had purified, not weakened her desire, realized that her hour had come. She threw herself at her Superior's feet and begged that she might be sent. Her prayer was not in vain; the departure was arranged for the spring of 1818. Philippine would willingly have left to others the care of the temporal interests of her mission, but this burden was placed upon her shoulders, and she foresaw and provided for the needs of each of her four companions, while forgetful of her own.

Now that God had given her her heart's desire, He took the bloom off it by her nomination as Superior of the American mission; her four daughters were Mesdames Octavie Berthold and Eugénie Audé and two devoted lay sisters. Mother Barat blessed her dear Philippine in the words said by the priest over the incense used at Mass: "Mayest thou be blessed by Him in whose honor thou art to be consumed." The foundresses then left the Mother House, encouraged by the approval of ecclesiastics, enriched with relics, followed by the prayers of the Society and strong in obedience.

## THE SEED IS SOWN.

On the 19th of March, 1818, the *Rebecca* sailed from Bordeaux, carrying the five Religious of the Sacred Heart to their longed for mission; they were bound for New Orleans by way of Cuba. Crossing the Atlantic in those days was not the pleasure trip it is to-day; "There is not much fun in it unless you do it for God," wrote Mother Duchesne. The *Rebecca*, buffeted by wind and tossed by storm, becalmed at times, pursued by pirates, even set on fire, carrying filthy disease-infected cabins, through insupportable heat, at last touched at Havana and on the 29th of May reached New Orleans. To the nuns the nine weeks' journey, the perils of which had been ascribed to them, were as naught beside the joy of reaching the Promised Land. Kneeling they kissed the ground which they had come to conquer for God. It was the Feast of the Sacred Heart and in the joy of their heart they renewed their vows and the consecration of their lives to the salvation of the savages.

At four o'clock the next morning they were graciously and cordially received at the Ursuline Convent; but Bishop Dubourg's kind letter of welcome to St. Louis was de-

layed; day after day passed and Mother Duchesne suffered to see her inaction prolonged and feared to impose on the generous hospitality of the Ursulines. Their charity was not confined to harboring the harborless and feeding the hungry, for Mother Duchesne fell ill and by these good nuns was nursed through an illness that nearly proved fatal. The Ursulines begged the Religious of the Sacred Heart to remain in New Orleans, where, they said, "neither negroes nor savages are wanting," but as her obedience was for St. Louis Mother Duchesne longed to be there, and hearing indirectly that the good Bishop expected them, they set out again in July.

After forty days of spiritual privation and bodily fatigue, they reached St. Louis. This journey up the Mississippi had not been without interest, for the majestic river and the virgin forests presented scenes of great beauty; and they found the squalid Indian villages they passed more appealing than new and promising cities.

Bishop Dubourg welcomed the nuns in his episcopal palace, a barn. The episcopal bed was four boards and the cathedral a shanty where the prelate alternately filled the office of bishop and choir. The religious would have been glad to face a similar poverty in St. Louis where they would have had the assurance of spiritual guidance, but the Bishop held to his first determination that they

should open a school at St. Charles. This small village on the Missouri, about twenty-five miles from St. Louis, was really only a group of shanties in the midst of the Sioux, but as a commercial center for trappers, it seemed to the prelate to promise a better future than the larger neighboring town, St. Louis.

Mother Duchesne found in the residence chosen for them at St. Charles the fulfillment of her longings for poverty and penance. The house was composed of one room and six cupboards; but by removing the beds each morning, they could accommodate ten children. The two-acre lot was without a tree or blade of grass and the nuns at once went to work, digging the earth and cleaning the stable. The Bishop had bidden them love their abjection which would bring forth fruit in abundance, and Philippine's faith made her esteem privation a privilege. Sometimes bread was lacking, the only water was from a little stream where the cattle waded, their poor walls let in the winter's bitter cold—the logs of wood were too big to burn and there was no one to chop for them. Maize, potatoes and salt fish formed the stock of provisions; eggs, butter and oil were unheard of luxuries.

A few children came as boarders; the day pupils were nearly all poor and ignorant and thus the favorites of Mother Duchesne. She had to adapt the methods of education in the Society to new and difficult circumstances

and her rigid disposition and her loyalty to Mother Barat made her slow to concede. The blessed Foundress understood better than her daughter that the Plan of Studies she had given her Society and the Code of Discipline she had inaugurated were to be expansive—a living organism, not a dead weight, and therefore could develop and change in details; but communication with France was slow and often completely withheld, and Mother Duchesne's sanctity alone kept the Society in America linked with the Center.





## THE SEED IN THE GROUND.

1819-1834.

Philippine had yearned to evangelize the Indians; God seemed to have approved, even more, to have inspired this desire, but the children of the forest were not yet to be the objects of her zeal. Once again God's voice called while His Hand held her back. She wrote to France: "If our Sisters picture us surrounded by savages, they are greatly mistaken." After speaking of the difficulty of obtaining pupils, she added: "In revenge we weed in the garden, carry straw, take the cows to water, with as much joy as if we were teaching, since God so wills it."

But lack of pupils was not the only cross. Several successive winters were unusually severe; during one the bread froze on the table, the water beside the fire. Once more the Ursulines of New Orleans were God's means of answering prayer, for they sent provisions from Louisiana. Then, too, robberies and burnings went on around the Convent; occasionally a prairie fire came dangerously near, and day and night they had to watch to put out the sparks that fell on the miserable buildings. One Holy Thursday the little

chapel caught fire; Mother Duchesne hastened from her sickbed to the altar which had been in flames, she saw in the center a black square; it was the charred pall covering the paten. She raised it and found the Sacred Host intact.

In the midst of these hardships there were consolations; the poor children quickly learned their prayers and hymns; the others, more favored with this world's goods, began to show a self-conquest that was new to them; one, while at home for a holiday, as a preparation for her First Communion, carried eight pails of water to help a slave. But it was above all Mother Barat's letters that brought unspeakable joy to Philippine who read them on her knees and drew from them new courage and confidence. The Superior General, who watched from afar, thought that the failure outweighed the success and that in St. Louis her nuns could do more for the Church; but Bishop Dubourg had serious reasons for not wishing to place the religious in a town where his own position had become all but untenable. He asked that one or two be left in St. Charles to conduct a new parish school about to be built, and that the others should go to Florissant to open a boarding school. He, however, acceded to Mother Barat's request that the foundation be undivided as she could not send more subjects to reinforce either house.

In August, 1819, the nuns moved to Florissant, eight miles away. The Bishop had given a portion of land but lack of funds retarded the construction of even a modest building, and the nuns on their arrival were sheltered for three months in a farm house. Primitive, too, had been their journey, they carried all the household goods in a wagon, while Mother Duchesne, ever seeking the hardest for self, insisted in going on foot, driving the cows and chickens before her. The better of the two rooms in the farmhouse served as a chapel, and Mother Duchesne could write: "We are established according to our desires, for he who has Jesus has all." Never had a chapel more truly pictured Bethlehem; for days no windows were there; the planks in the floor were wide apart, so, as Philippine said, "sweeping is easily done."

If she found in America the poverty of the first ages of the Church, she found there also the heroism of primitive Christianity. "Shall I tell you what it is that urges me on," she wrote to one of her religious sisters in France, "it is the example of the saintly clergy of this country and their ardent zeal. And above all I place the example of our good Bishop who is all things to all men, who works incessantly and suffers with generous fortitude; his trials are unnumbered, but how great he is in the midst of them!" It remains on record that a retreat given to the religious at this time by

the saintly Father Felix de Andreis, the Provincial of the Lazarists, raised the courage of the little band and made their abject poverty and physical pain more precious than all that the world could have offered of wealth or of pleasure.

The stay of the nuns on the farm was of short duration. Towards Christmas they dismissed their nine boarders and again taking all their household effects, and driving their cattle before them through snow up to their knees, they reached the house prepared for them. They arrived in time to get a room ready for Midnight Mass,—with what joy must the Divine Child have entered the home where He was to be Master and Lord! The inhabitants of Florissant hastened at once to give aid, and without delay a school was built. Children came from St. Louis, and several postulants were received. Mother Duchesne attributed this first sign of good being effected to the prayers of her beloved niece, Madame Aloysia Jouve, who had just died in France.

The establishment of a novitiate in America was in Mother Barat's eyes a sign that she might prudently grant Bishop Dubourg's request for other foundations, and in 1821 she gratefully accepted a house offered by a convert in Grand Coteau, Louisiana. There also the opening was made on a small and humble scale, a beginning that in the Society pro-

verbially stands for a pledge of God's blessing on a foundation. In Grand Coteau Mother Eugénie Audé found a log cabin and an extensive farm; five children came as boarders, but spiritual help was wanting. Little by little conditions improved; to the joy of all, Mother Barat sent several religious from France, new pupils were received, but as brighter skies promised, the Superior fell gravely ill and Mother Duchesne went to her bedside. On the return journey she, herself, fell a victim to yellow fever and was obliged to halt at Natchez, where she feared that she would die without the Sacraments; but Philippine, God's little seed, had another kind of death to undergo that she might bear fruit a hundred fold.

Four years later St. Michael, about sixty miles from New Orleans, was founded in utter poverty. Crosses increased in Louisiana; the overflow of the Mississippi and a terrible hurricane brought devastation and misery in their wake; but as if in compensation, unlooked for spiritual help came to Florissant about this time in the arrival of a colony of Jesuits. Mother Duchesne helped them out of her own poverty. Her convent was in the greatest need just then, but "we must be a providence to others," she would say, "as God is to us." The work of the Church, the missions, received an apparent setback in the resignation and departure of its bishop.

Urged by his successor, Mother Barat advised Mother Duchesne to purchase property in St. Louis. The good Mother, though keenly alive to the difficulty of supporting a new mission when Florissant was in such want, applied to the well known charity of Mr. John Mullanphy, who gave the Society some land on condition that as long as the foundation endure, twenty orphans would be received and cared for. Mother Duchesne thought that she found in the house and garden some resemblance to her loved Ste. Marie d'en Haut, for it stood on a slight elevation above the Mississippi.

Beginnings here, too, were blessed by the cross. Although the house did not deserve its reputation of being haunted, it was none the less a popular resort of wild cats and "huge spiders that sang like birds." Sixty children soon came to learn from Mother Duchesne more than human science could teach. The house at St. Charles was re-opened in 1828, but children were not numerous there as in the Southern Houses and Mother Duchesne painted in glowing terms the splendid prosperity of St. Michael and Grand Coteau, the schools full to overflowing and the good work being done; and contrasted this success with the apparent failure in Missouri of which she thought herself to be the cause. "I am an old worn out stick," she wrote to her Superior, "quite useless and only in every one's way.

All that I have a hand in goes wrong," and she begged to be discharged from responsibility. She felt that her imperfect English, her austerity, her slowness to take up new methods, her desire to work for the Indians and for the slaves, gave offense; and, Mother Barat, hearing complaints from various quarters, thought that perhaps her daughter's love for humility and poverty and her unswerving loyalty to the Center might have prevented her making concessions necessary to gain the confidence of the families of the children.

She wrote to her dear Philippine to be less severe, but great was her joy to hear from Bishop Rosati who appreciated Mother Duchesne's austere virtue, that she and she alone, was 'quite suited to her place and was the Superior whom he desired for St. Louis. Philippine gave up her hopes, and found in the position of responsibility she might not escape, sorrows and trials which compensated for the hidden life not yet to be hers.

In 1832 cholera ravaged the Mississippi Valley and many nuns and children at St. Michael and Grand Coteau were among its victims. Another sorrow to Mother Duchesne's heart, tender in its very strength, was the news that her dear Ste. Marie d'en Haut had been closed. At about the same time she made the sacrifice of the two daughters who had come with her from France so long be-

fore, and who had borne with her the labors and the heat; Mother Octavie Berthold went to her eternal reward, and Mother Eugénie Audé was called to France to represent the American colony at the Mother House. Philippine, God's little grain of wheat, had been trodden into the ground, but her Christ-like loneliness was the pledge that she would not remain alone, but would bring forth fruit.





## THE GRAIN OF WHEAT DIETH.

1834-1852.

In 1834 Philippine's desire for the hidden life was granted and she left St. Louis for Florissant, "the poorest and humblest house of the Society," to be its poorest and humblest inmate. Her room was a miserable hole with a single window, her sole covering at night an old piece of black stuff with a cross like a pall, salt the only remedy for fingers that were almost raw from the cold, her chosen portion the scraps left by the children, and at night she would visit their dormitories and mend their stockings and clothes. She spent hours digging in the garden and caring for the sick, but her zeal embraced the world; and the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith were her favorite reading.

In 1840 Madame Galitzin who had been sent to visit the American houses, came to Florissant, and radical changes followed. Mother Duchesne rejoiced in that which relieved her from the post of Superior. Another of her desires still remained unfulfilled. Twenty-two years before, in leaving France,

she had vowed to devote her life to the Indians, and God, who inspired the desire, had kept her from fulfilling the promise. Now that she had spent herself and been spent in works that appealed to her less, now that she was full of years and worn with labors and weak with physical maladies, He in His inscrutable Providence, accepted her offer. She had prayerfully followed the missionaries in their work in distant fields, and she listened eagerly to what Father de Smet told her of the tribe of the Pottawattomies. He begged that some religious of the Sacred Heart be sent to them; his request was granted and Mother Barat named her Philippine as one of the missionaries.

They reached Sugar Creek in July, 1841, and were warmly welcomed by the Indians, who to the number of seven hundred, either embraced or shook hands with Mother Duchesne. She and her companions were lodged for a time in the hut of one of the savages, but a house was soon built for them. These Indians who resembled the early Christians in fervor, treated the nuns with the greatest respect and saved what they thought best for the "aged lady" as they called Mother Duchesne.

The school prospered from the first; the children and the women learned to knit and to sew; cooking, too, was a science in which they had need of instruction. Mother Du-

chesne seemed to have attained the goal of her life's desire, but she found that she was able to give little active service in the school. Her great age, her ignorance of the Indian language and her diminished strength made much work impossible. There had been hesitation about sending her to Sugar Creek, but Father Verhaegen, confident in the power of an heroic soul, had insisted: "Well, if she cannot work, she can pray for the mission;" and this the venerable Mother did for four hours in the morning and as many in the afternoon. On Sunday, they would bring her light repast to the Church door that she might not be too long away from Him without whose strength her very strength was weakness. Her increasing bodily sufferings were offered for the "dear Indians," who held her in veneration and called her "the woman who always prays." During her long devotions they would reverently steal in to kiss her habit. The chalice of her sufferings, however, was not yet filled, another journey, another station lay between her and Heaven. After a year among the Pottawattomies her health failed completely, and Bishop Kenrick, who was visiting Sugar Creek, insisted on bringing her back to St. Charles. But her energy and zeal kept her useful to the end; for a time she taught a class of poor children.

Then came another sorrow—Florissant was closed, and the novitiate transferred to St.

Louis. Infirmities and isolation were to perfect this generous soul whose yearnings were all for God's glory and who thought not at all of the failure or success of the life she had lived, but for Him. Those whose old age is crowned with holiness are ever more ready to see visions of the future than to dream dreams of the past. Mother Duchesne's room was near the chapel. Her great joy was to answer Mass there when no acolyte was at hand, and to spend uncounted hours before the Blessed Sacrament. There she found encouragement and consolation in the new trials that came to her, there she sent up to heaven the cry that saved St. Charles from the closing that threatened; there and there alone she poured out the grief caused by Mother Barat's apparent forgetfulness and silence. For long years a strange misunderstanding on the part of an intermediary prevented any of Philippine's letters from reaching the Mother House. But Mother Duchesne's heart was not the only one to be grieved and in 1847 Mother Amelie Jouve on her way from France to Canada was sent by the Superior General to St. Charles to learn why there had been no communication from her "dear Philippine." This great consolation and the renewed intercourse with the Mother House were but the preludes to further suffering. She grew weaker and weaker, and at times thought that God was asking the terrible sac-

rifice of her mental life; but it was not so, her mind was clear to the end.

Mother Duchesne had once hoped that the day would come when she might work under the protection of her patron, St. Rose, in South America; this was not in God's designs, but He wished a missionary for that land to be fired by the zeal of the Venerable Philippine, and Mother du Rousier en route for South America was sent to visit St. Charles. There she received for herself and her mission the blessing of the dying Mother whose powerful intercession has been manifested in the success of the South American foundations. Her work was complete—it was the latter day of the valiant woman who should rejoice with the joy of eighty-four years that had been all for God; it was the hour of the last combat of God's athlete:

“Long was the burden of his sultry day,  
The athlete in the arena nearly fell;  
Nor knew until the last faint gasp of life  
If he should win the fight he fought so well.

See, he is dying now, the eager soul  
Through bars of flesh has almost burst its way,  
Vigil and fast and midnight prayer have brought  
The earthly tabernacle to decay.

God's hand shall wipe away for ever more  
The tears and dust and blood from off his face,  
God's arm enfold him, God's eternal love  
Hide him forever in its deep embrace.”

The end came peacefully; after receiving our Lord as Viaticum she begged Him not to delay, and He who so often had kept her waiting, that she might be perfected, now that she was perfect, called her to Himself.



## THE RISING HARVEST.

1852-1918.

Mother Barat's farewell words to Philippine thirty-four years before had been those of the blessing of the grain of incense, "Mayest thou be blest by Him in whose honor thou art to be consumed," and now on the 18th of November, 1852, the "Consummatum est" resounded in St. Charles, and its echoes found their way to the Mother House and to the afflicted heart of the Blessed Foundress. St. Charles was sweet as with the fragrance of a grain of incense, consumed at life's altar of sacrifice; but America was to be rich in the fruit of God's little grain of wheat—Rose Philippine Duchesne. At the end it had been given to her faith to read the promise of *God's* success in *her* apparent failure.

"Such is success on earth, so dearly bought  
And wrung in conflict fierce from nature's death,  
Nor won until that nature, struggling still,  
Owns itself vanquished in its latest breath."

She had said that all would go well after her death, and her words were prophetic.

It is not possible in this brief sketch to speak of the many houses whose foundations

may be traced back to the lowly home of St. Charles; of the numbers of children trained by the successors of the humble Mother Duchesne, of the many religious who have striven to follow in her footsteps. Perhaps her four score years and more made little mark in the world—they did far more, they created an atmosphere which impregnates the very walls of the house where she lived, and the stones all but cry out what they witnessed of humility, poverty and abnegation. She, like all who follow in the steps of their persecuted Leader, has been harshly criticised even by the good; but the adverse criticism comes from those who do not know her. Those who lived with her in the acid test of every day life knew her and called her a saint. “She is the St. Francis Assisi of our Society” wrote one. “I have seen an Anthony in the desert” said another; “She is a St. Alexis” was the judgment of a third who had been to visit her in her corner under the stairs which she called her cell. Ecclesiastics revered her as a saint—and they are slow to beatify and canonize. One, Father Verhaegen, S. J., who interred in the little cemetery of St. Charles, all that was mortal of this saintly missionary, wrote in the Parish Register. . . . “Eminent in all the virtues of religious life, particularly humility, she died in the odor of sanctity”. . .

The children whose instinct in the discernment of spirits is little short of infallible,



reverenced her: "Take me to Mother Duchesne," they would say when naughty and troublesome, "she will talk to me of God and I shall be forgiven." The poor and lowly saw our Lord in her sanctity as she regarded Him in their poverty. She was the valiant woman, her price was as of things brought from afar; she rose in the night of the French Revolution and gave spiritual food to her maidens. She considered the distant field, and bought it, paying the price. She girded herself with strength. Her lamp was not put out in the night of failure. She put out her hand to strong things and opened her hand to the poor. She opened her mouth to wisdom and the law of clemency was on her tongue. Give her of the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her. Her children await but the word of the Church to arise and call her blessed.



















2627

